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still going strong...](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Quick check-in on the [No Fucks Given](#) **Challenge:** still going strong. Today's post is unrelated, but the spirit is alive



🔥 DAY 3: THE POWER OF NO

Saying "no" feels dangerous because **you think rejection = loss of love**. Today, you take back control.

Your Challenge:

- ✓ Say NO to something you normally say YES to.
- ✓ Do it with no excuse. Just 'No, thanks.'
- ✓ Feel the power of disappointing people—and surviving.

Because **when you stop fearing disappointment, you become unstoppable.**

Ok log your results [here](#).

Or find the link pinned in the comments below if you're listening to the podcast version.

Now, let's get into it...

EDITOR'S NOTE: I had a front-row seat to one of the most hilarious legal battles in author publishing history. This is an excerpt from my new book Hell & Paradise. I'm giving advance review copies to [my_first 100 paid subscribers](#). Enjoy!

Chapter 8: CockyGate



Erika was never one for the limelight. Yet somehow, she was an expert at finding it.

One morning, Erika unwittingly ignited a scandal in the romance publishing community that would forever be remembered as #Cockygate.

It all started innocuously enough—a few posts back and forth between authors about an increasingly bizarre trend:

Romance authors trying to trademark everyday words.

But when Faleena Hopkins attempted to trademark the word “cocky,” it unleashed a tsunami of chaos Erika could never have anticipated.

Faleena, in a misguided attempt to protect her “intellectual property,” sent Erika a cease-and-desist letter.

Instead of backing down, Erika did what few others might have: she stood her ground. She went public with her story—triggering a flood of support from indie authors, legal experts, and readers alike.

When the story broke, the internet reacted mercilessly.

Twitter erupted with jokes, memes, and biting commentary that only the collective wit of the digital hive mind could produce.

Comments ranged from clever to absurd, underscoring the sheer ridiculousness of attempting to copyright a common word.

Some of the most viral tweets read:

- **“So, wait... am I not allowed to describe my rooster as cocky anymore? Asking for a barnyard friend.”**
- **“Just trademarked the words ‘the,’ ‘love,’ and ‘book.’ See you all in court.”**
- **“Does this mean my cocky ex owes me royalties every time he opens his mouth?”**
- **“Breaking news: Webster’s Dictionary files for bankruptcy after author trademarks the English language.”**

The memes were no less brutal...

A popular one featured a picture of a rooster, feathers puffed out in anger, with the caption: “Faleena’s next victim.”

Another showed a courtroom sketch of a gavel-wielding judge saying, “Order in the court! We’re discussing grave cocky matters.”

And then, there were the Goodreads reviews. Oh, the reviews.

Thousands of sarcastic, one-star ratings began appearing on Faleena’s books, with titles like Cocky Firefighter, Cocky Surgeon, and Cocky Billionaire.

Users invented their absurd spin-offs like:

- **Cocky Lumberjack Who’s Afraid of Commitment or Cocky Lifeguard Who’s Never Seen the Ocean.**
- **One reviewer wrote:** “I’d rate this book zero stars, but I’m afraid I’d get sued for trademark infringement.”
- **Another said:** “Faleena reading synonyms for cocky after realizing she can’t trademark them all.”

When the hashtag started trending, Twitter users got creative:

- **#CockyAndTheTrademarkStealers**
- **#CockyNotSorry**
- **#KeepItCocky**
- **#FreeTheWord**

One of the most popular tweets said,

“This summer’s biggest blockbuster: CockyGate: Rise of the Cock-blocked Authors.”

Media outlets covering the story couldn't resist their wordplay:

- **“Who's the Cockiest of Them All?” – BuzzFeed**
- **“Authors Unite to Cockblock Trademark Tyranny” – The Guardian**
- **“CockyGate: How One Word Sparked a Legal Showdown” – NPR**

Months after the fiasco, someone created a fake GoFundMe page titled:

“Help Faleena Trademark the Entire English Language. Goal: \$1 Billion.”

In the comments section, people pledged imaginary amounts:

- **“\$5 for every time I've been cocky in my life.”**
- **“\$100 if she trademarks sarcasm next.”**
- **“\$1,000 to remove her trademark on cocky and trademark petty instead.”**

Her inbox exploded overnight. Journalists from **The New York Times**, **BuzzFeed**, and **The Guardian** reached out for interviews. Every time she refreshed her email, there were new requests.

Bloggers and booktubers posted videos dissecting the drama, and podcasters dedicated entire episodes to the unfolding debacle.

Her book sales soared.

People who had never read a romance novel bought her work out of solidarity.

A parody GoFundMe campaign titled “Save the Word Cocky” raised \$10,000 in under 48 hours.

The funds were later redirected to literacy charities.

One particularly inspired fan created a T-shirt that read:

“I’m Too Cocky to Care,”

with proceeds supporting indie authors’ legal defenses.

As #Cockygate gained traction, readers and authors rallied behind Erika. The hashtag became a trending topic worldwide, with even non-romance readers interested.

Here are some of the most memorable reactions from that wild time:

One of the earliest viral tweets showed a mock book cover:

The Cocky Adventures of a Cocky Cock by Cocky McCockface.

- **Caption:** “Coming soon to a bookstore near you (or maybe not, if Faleena has her way).”

Another user posted a picture of a rooster in sunglasses perched atop a motorcycle:

“Sorry, but I’ve been using the word ‘cocky’ since I was hatched. Sue me. #CockyGate”

Authors across genres began piling on with their takes:

“Guess I better trademark the word ‘the’ before someone beats me to it.”

“Can someone trademark ‘abs’? Because I’ve used that in every romance novel I’ve ever written.”

“My next book: The Cocky Lawyer Who Trademarks Words. It’s a romantic thriller. Stay tuned.”

The self-published romance community turned #CockyGate into a rallying cry. Many posted pictures of their book covers with deliberately absurd titles:

- **The Cocky Librarian Who Won’t Let You Trademark His Card Catalog**
- **The Cocky Werewolf Who Trademarked His Pack**
- **The Cocky Billionaire’s Cocky Billionaire Club**

Lawyers and legal enthusiasts couldn’t resist chiming in.

One tweet read:

“BRB, filing a trademark for the phrase ‘You’ve got to be kidding me.’”

Someone else photoshopped a courtroom scene with an exasperated judge saying:

“Did you seriously trademark a word? I’m sentencing you to community service in the Oxford English Dictionary.”

The cease and desist letter Faleena sent Erika sparked a wave of hilarity. An anonymous Reddit user “leaked” a parody version of the letter:

“To Whom It May Concern: I own the word ‘cocky.’ It’s mine. Forever. Don’t even think about it. Yours legally, Faleena (TM).”

Another meme circulated with a picture of a woman angrily clutching a thesaurus:

“Faleena reading synonyms for cocky after realizing she can’t trademark them all.”

Through all of this, Erika stayed true to herself. Even as her inbox flooded with interview requests from major media outlets, she refused to enter the spotlight. She let the hilarity unfold, knowing the internet was doing the work for her.

One of her rare comments was on Facebook:

“I guess I’ll need to trademark balls next. Faleena thinks she has the only ones.”

And with that, #CockyGate cemented its place in publishing history—not just as a legal debacle, but as a moment where the internet proved that laughter is the best response to absurdity.

Erika’s phone buzzed in her hand. It was time for the interview. Her face was flushed, her palms damp. She paced the small apartment as though walking off her nerves.

“Why did I say yes to this? Why?”

She whispered, half to herself, half to me.

“You’re doing this because you should be proud,” I said. “You stood up for yourself and other authors. This is your moment, Erika. Own it.”

She glared at me. “Easy for you to say! You’re not the one about to be grilled.”

“And you know what?” I said, leaning against the doorway, arms crossed. “No matter what happens, I’m proud of you. You’re a fighter. You’re doing what I’m too afraid to do—putting yourself out there.”

She blinked.

“Anton, this is not helping.”

I chuckled. “Okay, just remember—you’re the hero of this story. Now go nail that interview.”

She rolled her eyes, muttering about pep talks, not fixing barking dogs.

And, oh, the dogs. As soon as she hit “accept” on the call, three of them outside started a chorus of barking that would make Old Yeller weep.

She tried pacing to another room, but no luck. A lawnmower roared to life next door, accompanied by the singsong yelling of a workman shouting across the street—and his pounding jackhammer.

“Erm...sorry,” Erika muttered into the phone. “It’s, uh, a bit noisy here. One moment, please.”

I watched her scramble into the bedroom, but the barking followed, and then the living room. It's still too loud. Finally, she threw me an exasperated look and darted into the bathroom, locking the door behind her.

**“Okay, I’m here,” she said, slightly muffled by the tiled walls.
“Sorry about that.”**

The journalist chuckled on the other end.

“No problem. Sounds lively over there.”

Erika forced a laugh. “

Yeah, that’s one way to put it.”

Despite the bathroom's echo, she remained calm. As the questions came, her nervousness slowly ebbed away.

She talked about the absurdity of trying to trademark a word, the bullying tactics of the other author, and how important it was to stand up for herself and the writing community.

Her voice strengthened as she explained how the Authors Guild had come to her defense, and sales had soared during the chaos.

“The Authors Guild has been incredible,”

she said, gaining momentum.

“This isn’t just about me. It’s about protecting the creative freedom of all authors. If we let one person trademark a word like ‘cocky,’ what’s next? Will someone trademark ‘love’ or ‘hero’? Where does it end?”

When the journalist asked about her next move, Erika’s confidence was palpable.

“I decided to rename the book The Cockiest Cowboy to Have Ever Cocked.”

She said.

“It’s a cheeky nod to everything that’s happened—and to prove that no one can trademark a word and crush creativity.”

When she hung up, she looked at me, still seated in the living room. I had listened to the whole thing.

“Well?” she asked, bracing herself.

“You were incredible,” I said, meaning every word. “You turned chaos into opportunity, Erika. I’m so proud of you.”

Her face softened, though she waved off my praise dismissively. “I had no choice. It was either stand up or back down.”

I nodded. “But it was your choice to fight back. And that’s what makes you amazing.”

As she settled onto the couch, the dogs outside finally quieted. The lawnmower shut off. The world had calmed as if to let her enjoy her victory.

Meanwhile, I sat there, reflecting on my hesitation. Watching Erika fight and thrive made me painfully aware that I was too scared to take the leap and write for myself. Although I had written for others professionally, the idea of putting my name on something personal, something mine, still terrified me.

Erika had leaped. And she soared.

That day, she taught me what courage looked like.

It was the best Morning Coffee ever.

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Anton

Dancer, Writer, Buddhist.



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